

The species was also abundant on Orkney in 2003, where it is apparently a recent colonist, the first larval record being in May 2000. (T. Prescott, S. Gauld).

Might these outbreaks explain the North-east Scotland records for 2003? With such huge numbers present only 80 miles or so to the north-west, a few such strays would hardly be surprising. Significantly, my specimens at Ordiquhill were caught after a four-day period of sustained north-westerly winds that were initially strong then gradually moderated.

Will these strays enable Magpie Moth to re-colonise North-east Scotland? All my examples were males, but doubtless females can be windblown too. If so, would their progeny feed on heather? The caterpillar has never been recorded on that foodplant in our area, possibly because most heather moorland here is at a higher altitude and further from the coast than that used in the north-west.

I thank the observers named in the text for so helpfully providing me with information.—ROY LEVERTON, Whitewells, Ordiquhill, Cornhill, Banffshire AB45 2HS.

Some further examples of late broods of Lepidoptera

A great deal has been written about late broods of some of our Lepidoptera, which may be caused by global warming. I now note further examples of late broods which I have not mentioned before that have occurred on the Isle of Wight.

Donacaula forficella (Thunb.) 23 August 2003, at Totland. Single-brooded in June and July according to Goater (1986. *British Pyralid Moths*. Harley Books).

Microstega hyalinalis (Hb.) 5 & 9 September 2003, at Totland. There has only been one previous record of this species, on the Island and it is single-brooded in June and July according to Goater (*op. cit.*).

Idaea dimidiata (Hufn.) Single-dotted Wave, 11 October 2002 at Bonchurch.

Idaea trigeminuata (Haw.) Treble Brown Spot 11 October 2003 at Bonchurch.

Idaea aversata (L.) Riband Wave, 30 September 2003 at Totland.

Drepaua binaria (Hufn.) Oak Hook-tip, 10 September 2003 at Totland.

Agrotis clavis (Hufn.) Heart & Club, 27 September 2003 at Totland.

Hadena rivularis (Fabr.) Champion., 27 August 2003 at Totland.

Euplexia lucipara (L.) Small Angle Shades 30 August 2003 at Totland.

Acrouicta runicis (L.) Knot Grass, 12, 17, 20 & 21 September 2003 at Totland.

— SAM KNILL-JONES, 1 Moorside, Moons Hill, Totland, Isle of Wight PO39 OHU.

Entomologists – born or made?

This note was prompted by my recent discovery, amongst family papers, of a letter from my late mother to my late father which reads “Paul is now examining a caterpillar, a green furry one with black bands and pink tufts”. The significance is that the letter and the envelope are dated and postmarked respectively 4 August 1960, at which time I was a month short of my third birthday. Like many of us, I have been aware that my interest in insects extends back as far as I can remember. I well recall drawing ladybirds at nursery school in a classroom I attended when I was between three and four years old, and keeping caterpillars in jars at about the same time, but the letter provides confirmation that I was actively involved with moth larvae before I was three years old.

From the description and date, the caterpillar was clearly a form of the Pale Tussock *Calliteara pudibunda*. For the record, as it constitutes my first formal record ever, the letter was addressed from St Anne’s, Station Road, Sway, Hampshire (SZ 279980), where the caterpillar had been found that day. This was the house of my maternal grandparents, to which I returned repeatedly and spent much time annually until it was sold in 1976. I continue to pass through Sway most years and to this day there are various native trees and shrubs along the road by the house which are suitable larval foodplants for the Pale Tussock, which is frequent in the area. I have a vague memory that I picked up the caterpillar from the path by the road but, as I recall finding some other caterpillars this way, including a very fine Buff-tip *Phalera bucephala* when I was several years older, I may be confusing these memories.

That my mother described the caterpillar to the extent she did, in a much more general letter, is a reflection of her keen interest in natural history. While not specifically an amateur lepidopterist, she could name some of the British butterflies at this time when most of the villagers of Sway could not. We first learned the other species together courtesy of the picture cards which were distributed in packets of Brooke Bond tea in 1963 and we collected them into an album which I still have. While possibly I may have been interested in insects from my first encounter with them after birth, it is certain that my mother, who was a primary school teacher all her working life, made a point of spotting and encouraging my interests.

Dad was not such an accomplished naturalist but he loved walking in the Lake District and passed to me as a child his well-worn copy of “The rambler’s pocket guide to life and growth by the wayside” by S.C. Johnson (Foulsham, London, “Wartime Print” edition, undated). This little hardback has a Red Admiral butterfly *Vanessa atalanta* on the wrapper and an illustrated section on butterflies and moths within. Even more interesting in this context, I have my Dad’s copy of “Out with Romany once more” by G. Bramwell Evens (“Romany of the BBC”) into which is inserted a hand-written postcard addressed to my father, postmarked 25 August 1938 and signed Romany. The message on the card advises my father on the care of snails in captivity and is in response to a query Dad had written to the BBC on the subject, probably following one of Romany’s popular radio broadcasts. My father would have been ten years old at the time.

Such evidence demonstrates that I was born into a family where both parents had an interest in wildlife to some degree, including Lepidoptera and rearing snails! As my own interests developed, my parents acquired more books for me and took me to zoos, museums and other places where I could learn about Lepidoptera to compliment our rambles and family holidays. We also did many other activities together, ranging from brass-rubbing and gardening to scramble-biking and hot-rodding! Among many wonderful entomological memories is a visit I made with my parents to Watkins & Doncaster when the company was at 110 Park View Road, Welling, Kent. After showing me a drawer full of Death's-head Hawk-moths *Acherontia atropos* and many other wonders, Richard Ford signed a copy of his *Practical Entomology* for me, and fortunately dated it – 30 October 1967. I was ten at the time. I had discovered Watkins & Doncaster via a catalogue given to me by a friend of my father's who attended the same church in Oxford. Those catalogues were really the door to the world of entomology for me and my interest developed much deeper and faster from then on. *Practical Entomology* joined *The Young Specialist looks at Butterflies* by Georg Warnecke (1964, Burke) and the surprisingly extensive information in the Brooke Bond card album as my guides on techniques. Then there was the annual exhibition of the Amateur Entomologists' Society, which I joined in 1968, and my first moth-trap, which I made to a design provided by Dickson from a back number of the *AES Bulletin* (25: 58-60), but that is another story (see *Bull. AES* 51: 257-263).

Some forty years on from the early 1960s, I now have a three year old daughter attending a local nursery school. In October 2003 I took to the nursery some live eggs, caterpillars, pupae and moths of readily available native species and gave twenty minute presentations to two of the classes of three year olds, with about twenty children per class. There is a cartoon book called *The very hungry caterpillar* by Eric Carle (1994, Hamish Hamilton, but originally published in 1969), which has been very popular amongst this age group for many years and continues to be so. All the children knew it and my aim was to take them through the life-cycle and the story but showing them what the real thing looks like. The children sat in a semi-circle around me on the floor and my exhibits were passed around in order, with the children invited to handle them – gently. I had scattered the previous night's catch from my garden light-trap into a large box of fallen leaves and the children had to find the moths amongst them, which caused great entertainment. Both classes paid rapt attention for the full twenty minutes, which was a pleasant surprise for the teachers because this sort of session is not a normal event for the children. Amongst the feedback from the children, only one little boy and two little girls did not want to handle the insects, and they were not forced. The majority were really keen. When I asked if anyone had found caterpillars in their gardens or elsewhere, quite a number of the children said yes. Two boys in particular responded and behaved as if finding caterpillars was quite familiar and that they had found several, if they are to be believed and were not simply exaggerating to impress. Perhaps the great majority, if not all of us, are born potential entomologists. Clearly other interests may compete for our attention, but whether we develop our entomological interest may well depend on the level of

encouragement, or discouragement, we receive, at home and elsewhere. One of the little girls said her mother had told her not to touch! Perversely, I suspect such an instruction, dependent on source and frequency, might also have served as encouragement rather than discouragement to some of us!— PAUL WARING, Reader, Writtle College. Address for correspondence: Windmill View, 1366 Lincoln Road, Werrington, Peterborough, PE4 6LS (e-mail: paul_waring@btinternet.com).

Psectra diptera (Burmeister) (Neur.: Hemerobiidae) in Gloucestershire

Two examples of *Psectra diptera* – both micropterous females - were found in the ancient limestone grassland of Swift's Hill (O.S. grid reference SO 80) in the Slad Valley of the Cotswold Hills, East Gloucestershire. The first was taken by sweep-netting along the south-facing slopes where there is an open but tall grassland sward dominated by tor grass *Brachypodium pinnatum*, on 4 August 2003, and one was found in the same area again by suction sampling on 6 September 2003. The species is known to favour rank tussocky vegetation and is known from a wide variety of long-established semi-natural situations, both wet and dry (Plant, 1994, *Provisional atlas of the lacewings and allied insects of Britain and Ireland*). Although known from other calcareous grasslands – notably the Chalk of the Chilterns, North and South Downs, and Cambridgeshire, but also Jurassic Limestone in Northamptonshire (Kirby & Welch, 1990, *Neuro News* No 7: 4-10) - it has not previously been reported from the Cotswolds or any other downlands this far west.

Thanks to Colin Plant for confirming my determination.— KEITH N. A. ALEXANDER, 59 Sweetbrier Lane, Heavitree, Exeter EX1 3AQ.

The Burren – a brief summary of its butterflies in 2003

I can vividly recall my first visit to the Burren in March 1977 when, on a cold and wet morning, as a secondary school student, my classmates and I were loaded onto a bus and transported to north Co. Clare on one of those dreaded school tours. Little did I realise, at that time, the hold this unique area would take on me. My entomological interest developed with several other events that same year, namely my first sighting of a Green hairstreak *Callophrys rubi* L., a single Painted lady *Cynthia cardui* L. on privet blossom *Ligustrum vulgare* in my parents back garden and, most spectacular of all, the sight of a Deaths Head Hawk-moth *Acherontia Atropos* L., which flew through our kitchen window in late September.

Living in Co. Kerry has its advantages, an area of natural beauty in Killarney only half an hours drive away and, even more importantly, ease of access to the Burren, which entails a drive of several hours and a short ferry crossing of the Shannon. Since 1984, I had been fortunate enough to visit the area about thirty times and this number could be much higher except for the vicissitudes of the Irish weather. However, during 2003, I did manage to make five visits and in this short note, have attempted to briefly outline what was recorded where, when and in what abundance.